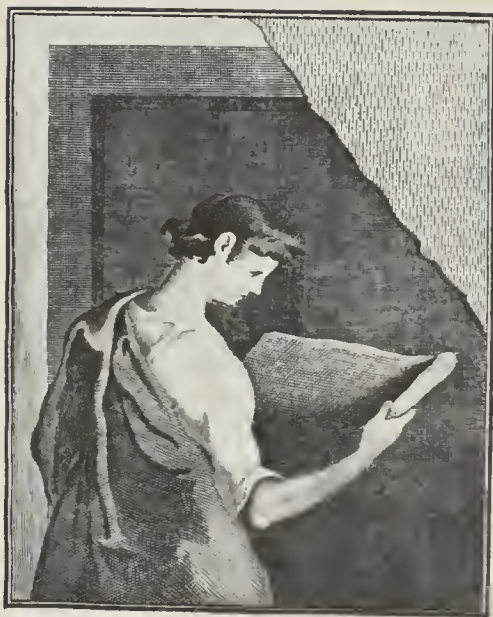


ROMANTIC
ITALIAN
LANDSCAPES

HUBERT ROBERT
(1733-1808)



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HUBERT ROBERT

A Series of Four Paintings
on Canvas
representing

ROMANTIC ITALIAN LANDSCAPES

French Works of Art of the XVIII Century

Painted in 1795

By

HUBERT ROBERT

(1733-1808)

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while he was Director of the Louvre.

From the Collection of the late

COMTE DE LA BERAUDIÈRE,

Paris.

Originally in the Collection of

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL COMTE LEGENDRE D'ONZEMBRAY,

Château de Villemereuil, Aube;

Afterwards in that of

Etienne-Marie-Antoine Champion,

COMTE DE NANSOUTY,

who resided at the

Ancien Hôtel de La Beraudière

(then known as the Hôtel Dangeau)

under the Empire,

and from whom they descended by inheritance

to the late owner.

F O R E W O R D

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The subjects of these landscapes are splendidly characteristic of Hubert Robert's immortal style, and conform entirely to those imaginative and exquisite compositions which astonish us by their fantasy, and interest us in the endeavour to locate the transformed familiar sites and monuments of ancient Italy, especially in the neighbourhood of Rome. Robert studied nature with a strongly implanted conscientiousness and translated it on his canvases with superb grandeur. His work, like that of Claude Lorraine, expresses a poesie which penetrates to the soul without the least labour of the imagination, but Claude never rose to that height of spiritual interpretation which places Hubert Robert beyond all other landscape painters of his time and country.

TITLES OF PAINTINGS

1. - CASCADES OF TIVOLI, NEAR ROME.
(Castelles of Monte Aventino)
 2. - CASCADES NEAR ROME.
(Castelles of Ponte Lugano)
 3. - RUINS OF AN ANCIENT TEMPLE.
(Temple of the Sibyls)
 4. - A VILLA IN A PARK NEAR ROME.
(Obelisk of the Piazza St. John Lateran)
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CASCADES OF TIVOLI, NEAR ROME
(Cascatelles of Monte Aventino)

Rising in the centre of the picture, against a cloudy sky, is a complicated formation of stratified rock, recognised as Monte Aventino, its main bulk leaning towards the right; beneath this rushes a feathery cascade through the course of a ravine towards quiet water in the foreground; at the left rising from a cliff, is a buttressed architectural gallery terminating in a domed structure, with doors and balcony, from which tiny figures are observing the scenery around them; at the right, other rock formations are overgrown with trees, at the foot of which is a mill and boat-house; small figures are seen nearby, two of them are holding a boat at the water's edge; at the lower left are three women, variously occupied in the washing of clothes, accompanied by a child.

Height: 32 inches. Width: 25-3/4 inches.



CASCADES NEAR ROME

(Cascatelles of Ponte Lugano).

Sweeping across the centre of the picture, and pierced with two arches, is a partly ruined stone bridge, crossing a double cascade, which falls among disordered rocks, forming a ravine, in the foreground; rising at the right is a perpendicular rocking cliff surmounted by trees, and a ruined machiolated rotunda of Romanesque architecture; in the distance is a range of mountains against a cloudy sky; in the foreground, three children, a man and a woman, are variously engaged in viewing the torrent; two other children view the scene from the bridge above.

Signed and dated: H. ROBERT, 1795, beneath the children at the right.

Height: 32 inches. Width: 25-3/4 inches.



RUINS OF AN ANCIENT TEMPLE(Temple of the Sibyls)

Occupying the whole centre part of the picture is a peripteral edifice, comprising a partly ruined circular cell, transformed with a thatched roof and chimney, and the remains of its circular Corinthian colonnade and entablature at the right; the whole is supported on a circular basement approached by a triangular stair-rise, flanking the lower outer wall; from an upper window of the central building a linen sheet is hanging from two extended poles; through the door of the cell, beyond a guard rail placed before it, can be seen a cauldron boiling over a fire; four women are variously occupied in washing clothes in a stream at the base of the temple, while another leans on the guard-rail above; a dog stands, barking, on an overturned sculptural figure of a sibyl lying in the immediate foreground; a willow tree bends over the stream at the right, while at the left is a forest; cloudy sky above.

Signed and dated: H. ROBERT; 1795, beneath the dog.

Height: 32 inches. Width: 25-3/4 inches.



A VILLA IN A PARK AT ROME

(Obelisk of the Piazza St. John Lateran)

Occupying the greater space of the picture is the façade of a Romanesque villa, with a central door supporting a pediment, and approached by a flight of stone steps; niches, in a slightly set-back wall on either side of the door, contain busts of men and full-length figures of women respectively; above the door a rectangular panel bears the inscription:- PARVA SED APTA * (Small but comfortable) and UTINAM VERIS IMPLEATUR AMICIS (Let us have many good friends). On the right breastwork of the steps is a bronze lioness spouting water in a large bowl on the ground; at the left, the companion lioness has been thrown down, with other objects, at the foot of a broken vase on a pedestal. An Egyptian obelisk rises from the open space at the right; in the distance some trees with a pathway between; several figures of women are seen variously occupied.

Signed and dated: H. ROBERT, 1795, on the lintel of the door.

Height: 32 inches. Width: 25-3/4 inches.

* This quotation is repeated on the Comte d'Artois' pavilion at Bagatelle.

Note upon the
ANCIEN HOTEL DE LA BERAUDIERE

This celebrated residence of the late Comte de La Béraudière, owner of the Hubert Robert landscapes, described herein, was originally constructed in the XVII century, after the plans of Etienne Prédot, architect under Louis XIV, for President Duret, secretary to the King, and owner of considerable property in the neighbourhood of the present Palais Bourbon. The locality in which this mansion stands was designated under the name of the Pré-aux-Clercs, an open space situated, during the Middle Ages, near one of the ancient gateways of Paris, north of the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés. At the present time this territory is occupied by the Rues Bonaparte, Jacob, de Seine, Faubourg St. Germain and the Rue de Bourgogne. During the sixteenth century it became the meeting place of the Huguenots, and was celebrated for the great number of duels fought there. During the latter part of the reign of Louis XIV, it became the fashionable quarter, and many fine residences were erected. It was during this time that the Duret residence was built, and after the President's death, in 1707, it became the property of the celebrated French historian, Philippe de Courcillon, Marquis de Dangeau, and it was

in this house that he wrote the greater part of his Journal de la Cour de Louis XIV, in which he recorded the daily events in the military, political and domestic life of the King, and famous men and women of the reign. Dangeau, at that time, was married to his second wife, Sophie, Comtesse de Loewenstein, niece of the Cardinal Furstenberg, and lady-in-waiting to the Dauphine. After his death, in 1720, the mansion succeeded to his son, who had lost a leg at the battle of Malplaquet (1709), and remained in his possession until he died in 1754, when it passed by inheritance to his daughter, the Marquise de Picquigny-Rohan. A few years afterwards, this lady sold the house to Comte Legendre d'Onzembray, whose reputation as a collector of works of art was well-established during the latter part of the eighteenth century. Legendre surrounded himself with many fine paintings and rare objects, which he divided between his Château de Villeméreuil, and his residence in Paris. The Comte died about 1805, and his possessions passed into the hands of his nephew, Comte de Nansouty, who occupied the mansion during the Empire. After his death the estate was inherited by the Comte de La Béraudière, in whose family the residence and artistic property remained until recently.

HUBERT ROBERT

1733-1808

HUBERT ROBERT was born in 1733, of prosperous burghess folk, and originally intended for the Church. He early showed artistic leanings, and was soon drifting towards the landscape style so characteristic of him, and so akin in many ways to the art of his friend Fragonard. He came to art at the parting of the ways from the school created by Watteau and the new movement wherein ruins displaced the French pastures. But his art was purified of the mere mechanical "ruin" school. He had some of that aerial vision, the poetry that lay in lights and shadows, and the colour faculty of Fragonard. Robert was one of the first painters of rank to make architecture play an important part in landscapes.

At seventeen, in 1750, he was training for the Church, but he doggedly sought the design, and was soon at work under Stodtz, the sculptor, who, being but lately come from Rome, urged the young fellow to go there. The youth went in 1754 with introductions to Panini, the painter of architecture, under whose guidance he worked hard for five years, when his health gave way. But his work was creating respect from the French colony in Rome; he was admitted to the French Academy in Rome, then housed at the Villa Medici, and was so well reported upon that the Pompadour's "little brother" Marigny sent an order for a picture by him. By 1760 he was travelling to

Naples with the Abbé Saint-Non; and it was on their return to Rome that they met and struck up their friendship with the student Fragonard. Thereafter they travelled about and lived together, and cemented that friendship which was to be life-long.

The peaceful life Robert now lived won him back to his old robust health. A man of intense daring and bodily vigour and nerve, it was only necessary to dare him to some mad adventure to start him upon it. In Rome he is said to have climbed to the top of the Coliseum alone, without aid of ropes; to have walked the cornice of the dome of St. Peter's, and he narrowly escaped being lost in the Catacombs.

By 1762, his time of studentship at the Academy being ended, he went to Florence for two years to Le Bailly de Breteuil, the Maltese Ambassador; thence, by way of Rome, he came to Paris in 1765, to be hailed with enthusiasm by the Academy, and was admitted and received on the same day, like Chardin before him. In 1767 he married Anne Gabrielle Soos, daughter of an army surgeon. An affectionate husband, deeply attached to a wife as deeply attached to him, he lived a happy, prosperous life, to which the first blow was dealt by Fate at the Revolution, when he lost his four children. He won from the start the powerful backing of the critics Diderot and Bachaumont, and was the centre of a wide vogue. He was called to the decoration of salons, which he achieved with remarkable success.

Robert became Designer of the King's Gardens, and he was partner to Caramontel in laying out the Parc de Monceaux in Paris.

One of his most famous works was the laying out of the Bains d'Appollon, the success of which brought him the coveted apartments at the Louvre in 1780. Councillor of the Academy in 1784, he became Keeper to the Royal Collection.

But all these honours were to serve him ill. The black shadow of the Revolution was at hand. He was cast into the prison of St. Pelagie, largely at David's ordering, on the accusation of emnity to the Republic; he passed on to St. Lazare, where his genial nature served him well - and where, up at six in the morning, he painted until midday, then took exercise in the yard. He escaped with his life, for Robespierre fell, and David's power declined; and, the year of Terror over, he was in 1794 made one of the ten members of the new successor to the Academy, and Director of the Louvre. About 1802 he went to Italy. In 1808, two years after Fragonard went to his grave, his old friend followed him. His widow outlived him thirteen years.

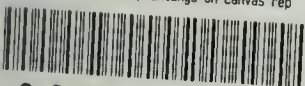
Hubert Robert, with Fragonard, carried on the Watteau vision, through Boucher, towards realism, and they stand on the threshold of the new movements of modern art.

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A series of four paintings on canvas rep

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Robert. Hubert. 1733



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